

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Home Office Building, (Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark)

and/or common Firemen's Building

2. Location

street & number 8-12 Park Place N/A not for publication

city, town Newark N/A vicinity of congressional district #10

state New Jersey code 34 county Essex code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture ☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial ☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☐ work in progress	☐ educational ☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment ☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☐ yes: restricted	☐ government ☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☒ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial ☐ transportation
	N/A	☐ no	☐ military ☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name St. Philips Corporation

street & number 24 Rector Street

city, town Newark N/A vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Essex County Hall of Records

street & number 469 High Street

city, town Newark state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1981 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Office of Cultural and Environmental Services

city, town Trenton state New Jersey

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
☒ excellent	☐ deteriorated	☐ unaltered	☒ original site
☐ good	☐ ruins	☒ altered	☐ moved
☐ fair	☐ unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Firemen's Insurance Company Building is a ten-story building which features Classical Revival ornamentation on facades and in major interior spaces. The architects were the prominent Newark firm of John H. and Wilson C. Ely. While construction took place in two stages between 1924 and 1928, both stages were included in the original design scheme and the facades are unified vertically in a three-part classical arrangement, with the bottom floors analogous to a column base, the middle floors to a shaft, and the top floors to a capital. The building is located at Park Place and Rector Street in Newark, facing the north end of Military Park near Trinity Cathedral (National Register listed 11/03/72) and the Symington/Continental House (National Register listed 03/02/72). See photos 1 and 2.

The building is flat-roofed and L-shaped in plan, with a principal facade on the south, facing Military Park, and a secondary facade on the west, facing Rector Street (See photo 3). The structural frame is steel, with concrete floor slabs. Exterior masonry cladding is Maine granite and Indiana limestone on the principal facade, Indiana limestone with marble spandrel panels on the secondary facade, and white glazed brick on the side and rear elevations. Window sash are double-hung metal, with glazed transoms on the two formal facades.

The three bottom floors of the building were constructed in 1924-25. The two-story facade of this section is the most ornamental part of the building's exterior, with a granite Corinthian colonnade topped by a granite entablature and balustrade (see photo 4). The quality of the stone carving in the ornamental features is uniformly high. Significant features include the column and pilaster capitals; the spandrel panel garlands and medallions; the triangular pediment, frieze and architrave around the center entrance; and the main entablature, with its foliated frieze ornament and modillion cornice. The windows and the ornamental doors in the center and side entrances are dark bronze, and valence-like bronze pediments with anthemion crestings are placed in the first floor openings at transom level (see photo 5).

The early section also contains the building's most significant interiors. The first floor public space includes coffered plaster ceilings, and wall paneling, wainscot and pilasters of mahogany. The executive offices on the second floor are similar in quality, with surviving original lighting fixtures, carpets and furnishings in addition to the interior architecture (see photos 6, 7, 8, and 9).

The upper floors were constructed in 1927-28. On the main facade, they are clad in limestone, with the top two floors treated as a capital through the use of balustrades, entablatures and a row of two-story Corinthian pilasters. The middle six floors are treated as a plain, vertical shaft, with ornament confined to the spandrel panels. The third floor is an extension of the base, with flatter window proportions and a simple entablature to separate it from the middle segment.

(continued)

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
☐ prehistoric	☐ archeology-prehistoric	☐ community planning	☐ landscape architecture	☐ religion
☐ 1400-1499	☐ archeology-historic	☐ conservation	☐ law	☐ science
☐ 1500-1599	☐ agriculture	☐ economics	☐ literature	☐ sculpture
☐ 1600-1699	☒ architecture	☐ education	☐ military	☐ social/
☐ 1700-1799	☐ art	☐ engineering	☐ music	☐ humanitarian
☐ 1800-1899	☒ commerce	☐ exploration/settlement	☐ philosophy	☐ theater
☒ 1900-	☐ communications	☐ industry	☐ politics/government	☐ transportation
		☐ invention		☐ other (specify)

Specific dates 1924-28

Builder/Architect John H. and Wilson C. Ely

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Firemen's Insurance Company Building is significant architecturally as a major work by important Newark architects, John H. and Wilson C. Ely; and as a good, intact example of office building architecture from the first third of the twentieth century, with a combination of academic and functional design characteristic of the period. It is significant commercially for its connection with a company which, at the time of the building's construction, headed a major fire insurance organization, which one contemporary source characterized as the largest in the world;*and for its general connection with the insurance industry in Newark, a prime force in the City's economic history since the early 19th century.

Architectural:

John H. Ely (1851-1932) and his son Wilson C. Ely (1873-1959) as a firm designed a series of important Newark buildings, including the City Hall, the New Jersey Historical Society headquarters, the Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Company Building, and the American Life Insurance Company Building (now Rutgers University Law Center). The firm's design style was well suited to Newark's conservative civic and corporate architectural tastes early in this century. On Wilson Ely's death, The New York Times noted: "His public buildings were in the Greek and Roman style, but his office buildings were in the functional style"* The Firemen's Building, perhaps fitting the company's position as both a major business and a long-standing Newark institution, is a hybrid of functional and classical design. As discussed in the Description section, the interior and exterior academic detail is of high quality, and the secondary elevations are clear, unadorned expressions of function with no formal detail.

Commercial:

The history of the insurance business in Newark dates at least to the founding of the Newark Mutual Fire Assurance Company, in 1810. Other companies appeared and the industry proliferated so successfully that by 1895 Newark ranked fourth nationally in insurance assets, exceeded only by Hartford, Philadelphia and New York.

The Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark was founded on August 3, 1855, when a group of thirteen Newark businessmen, all volunteer firemen, met and voted to issue stock in a new fire insurance company. Beginning with fifty thousand dollars in capital and rented office space in a bank basement, the company grew steadily. Capital had increased to one million dollars by 1898, and by 1912 the company occupied a new, sixteen story building at the corner of Broad and Market Streets. Firemen's began acquiring other insurance companies in 1916, and by 1928 headed The Loyalty Group, then the world's largest fire insurance organization, with nearly nineteen million dollars in capital.

*Journal of Industry and Finance, V. 3, No. 5, April 1929, pp. 49-50.

**The New York Times, August 29, 1959, p.17

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approximately 0.6Quadrangle name Elizabeth Quadrangle,Quadrangle scale 1:24,000UMT References New Jersey-New York

A 18 57 0 2 00 4 5 10 0.4 0
 Zone Easting Northing

B
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nomination comprises Block 17, Lot 7, as outlined in Volume 1, Plate 6 of Block Maps of the City of Newark (1953, scale 1" = 50'), a copy of which is included in supporting documentation.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William J. Higgins / Development Coordinator

organization The Aspen Group

date January 6, 1982

street & number 56 Park Place

telephone (201) 632-0300

city or town Newark

state New Jersey

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national X state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

Deputy

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Lauren Schmitt

title

date

April 30, 1982

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date

6/17/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

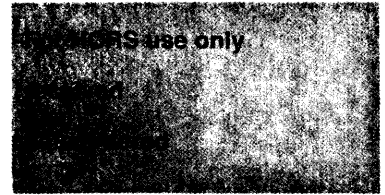
**National Register of Historic Places
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Home Office Building, Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark, NJ

Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

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The secondary facade is essentially a simplified version of the main one, and the remaining elevations are devoid of ornament and simple to the point of starkness. The architects contrasted the industrial character of the side and rear elevations with the classical facades, relying on general similarities in color tone - light masonry and dark metal windows - for unity.

Aside from the formal interiors of the original section, the office spaces are largely open and unornamented (see photos 10 and 11). Some floors include front offices with simple mahogany and glass partitions, and there is some use of similar mahogany paneling as wainscot along walls and around structural columns.

The exterior is in its original state and in excellent condition, with no significant deterioration or alteration aside from repainting the windows in light gray rather than the original dark color. The formal interiors have retained all of their important design details, and the only alterations are reversible: carpeting, a few minor partitions, and some lighting fixtures. The open spaces have undergone more modifications, principally dating from 1959 and after. These include metal wall panels to conceal environmental systems, acoustical ceilings in some spaces, and some new partitions, bathrooms and carpeting. None of these compromise the building's significance, since the offices were minimally finished spaces to begin with, and have largely remained so.

Verbal boundary justification: The Firemen's Building is bounded on the north by a narrow alley; on the south by Park Place; on the west by Rector Street, a parking lot, and the carriage house and grounds of the Symington/Continental House; and on the east by the adjacent building and a parking lot. The Firemen's Building essentially covers the entire lot on which it is located. The boundary for this nomination is the lot line, since the adjacent buildings and parking areas do not contribute to the Firemen's Building's significance. The lot line is shown in Volume 1, Plate 6 of Block Maps of the City of Newark (1953, scale 1"=50'), a copy of which is included in the supporting documentation for this nomination.

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Home Office Building, Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark, NJ

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

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The Firemen's Building, built at the height of the company's expansion in 1924-28 to replace the smaller building at Broad and Market, remained as the headquarters and symbol of The Loyalty Group until 1960. At that time it became regional headquarters of The America's Fore Group, an insurance conglomerate headed by the Continental Insurance Company, with which Loyalty had merged in 1957.

In 1978 Continental sold the building to Trinity Cathedral of Newark, which now operates it as a rental property. Although the building is no longer associated with any insurance company, it continues to be known popularly as the Firemen's Building, implicitly recognizing its historical significance as a major physical remnant of an important commercial enterprise.

The Firemen's Building's site underscores its architectural and commercial significance (See photos 12 and 13). The building stands at the north end of Military Park, one of the city's major public spaces since the seventeenth century. The park appears as the "Training Place" on the city map drawn in 1668, two years after the first settlers arrived. When the Firemen's Building was constructed, there were remnants of the substantial residential use which had bordered the park during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The major character was already commercial, however, and, with the single exception of the Symington/Continental House, the residential buildings soon disappeared.

At present, the park retains its historic shape and dimensions, and the twentieth century commercial buildings surrounding it have achieved their own significance. While time and cost prohibit the required research now, the Military Park area deserves to be studied for historic district potential.

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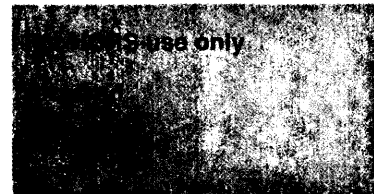
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Home Office Building, Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark, NJ

Continuation sheet

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FIREMEN'S BUILDING: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Kelchburg, Ann M. and Mullins, Ronald G., A History of the Continental Insurance Company, The Continental Corporation, New York, 1979.

Newark Evening News, Newark, New Jersey, clippings from files in the Newark Public Library: September 8, 1924; March 5, 1925; December 8, 1927; January 6, 1928; October 6, 1928.

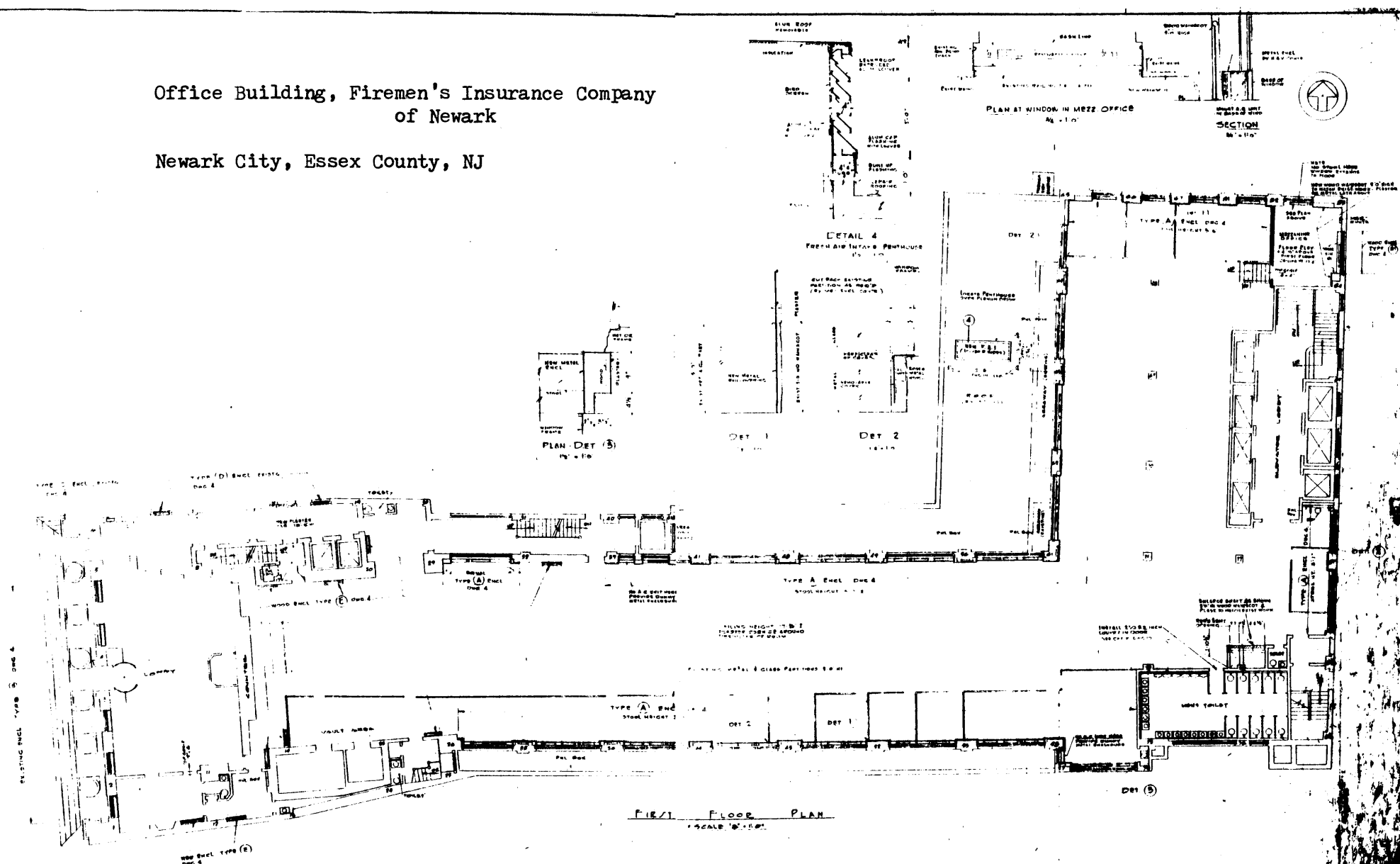
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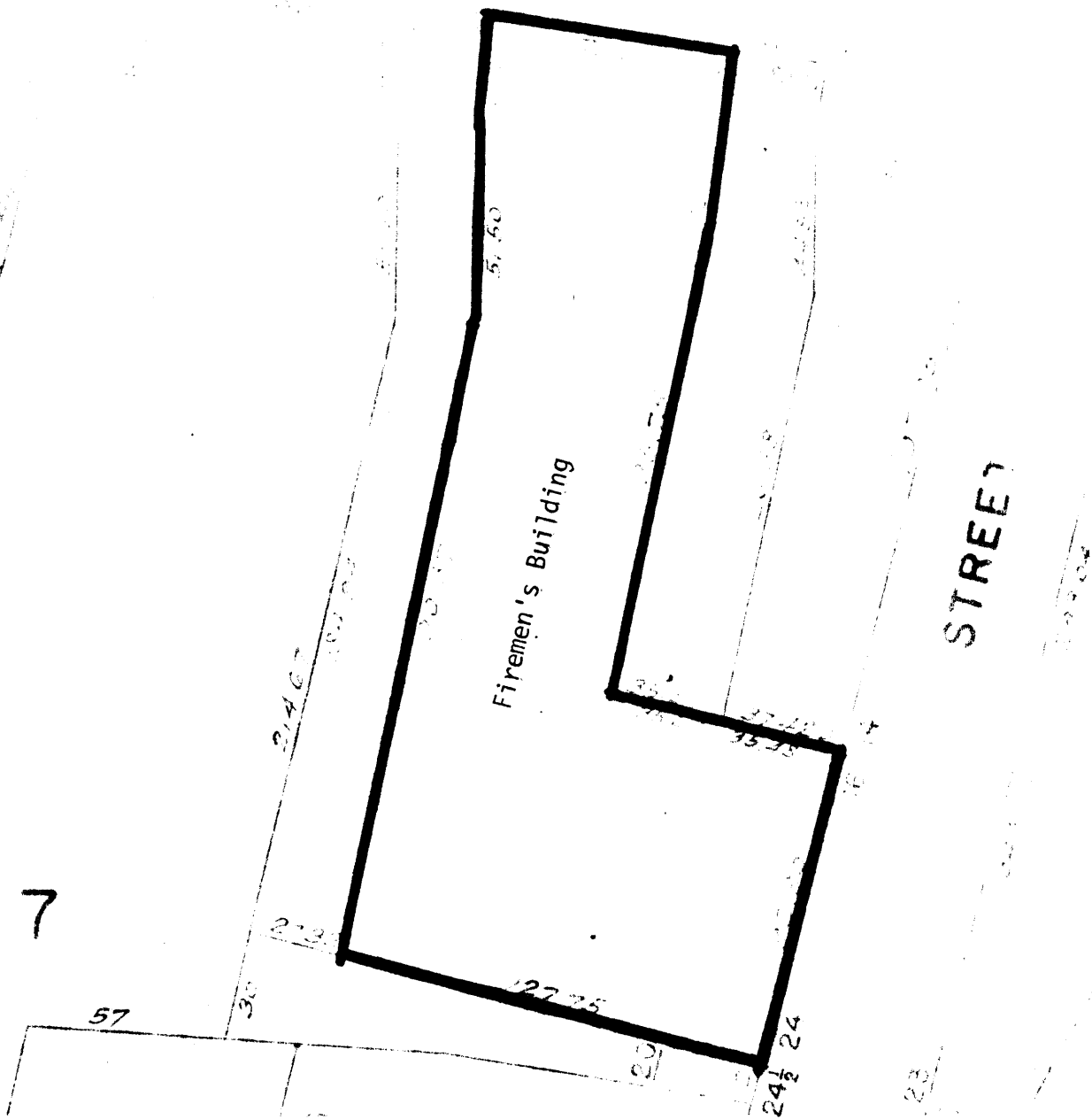
Journal of Industry and Finance, V. 3, No. 5, April 1929, pp. 49-50.

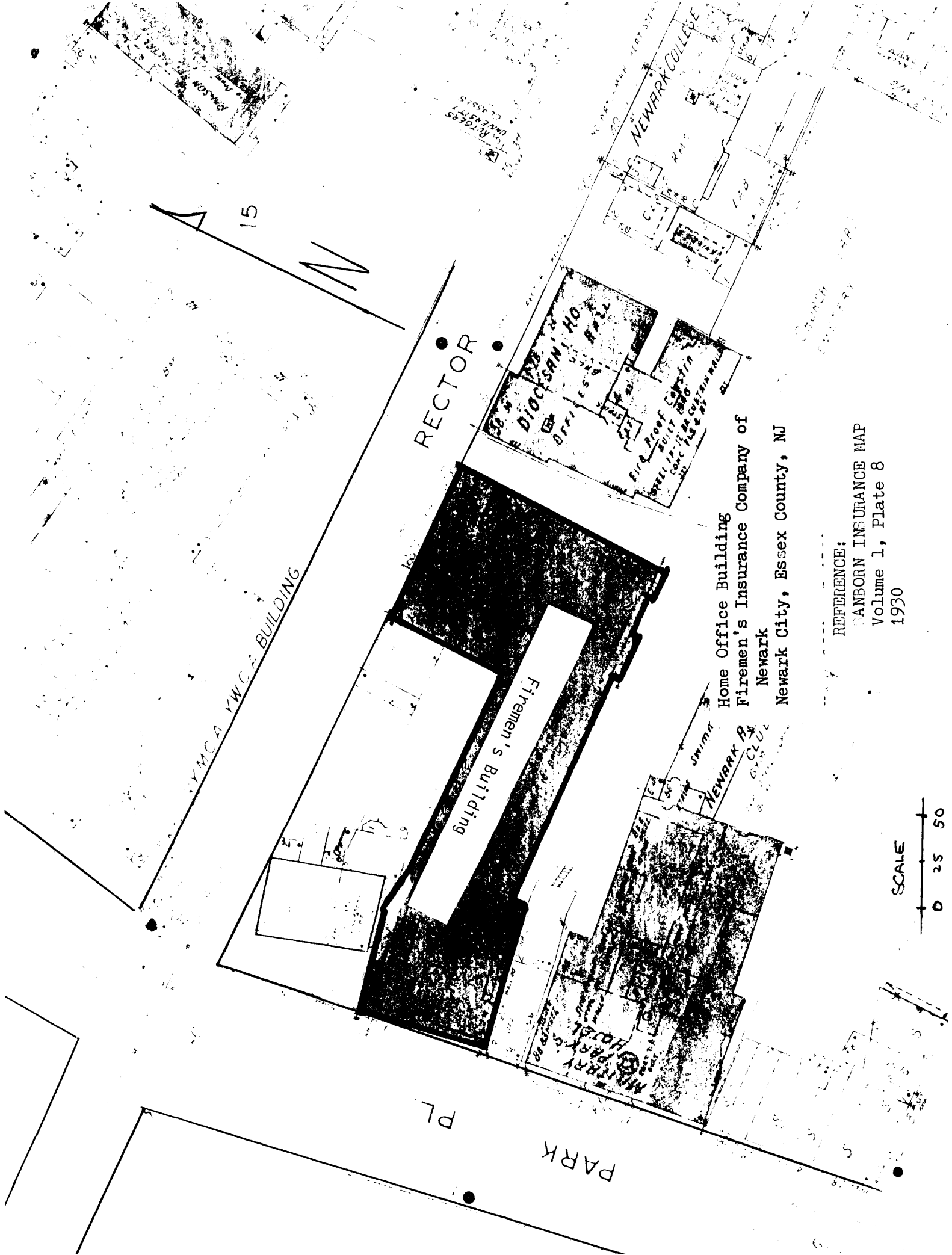
The New York Times, August 29, 1959, p. 17.

Newark City, Essex County, NJ



17





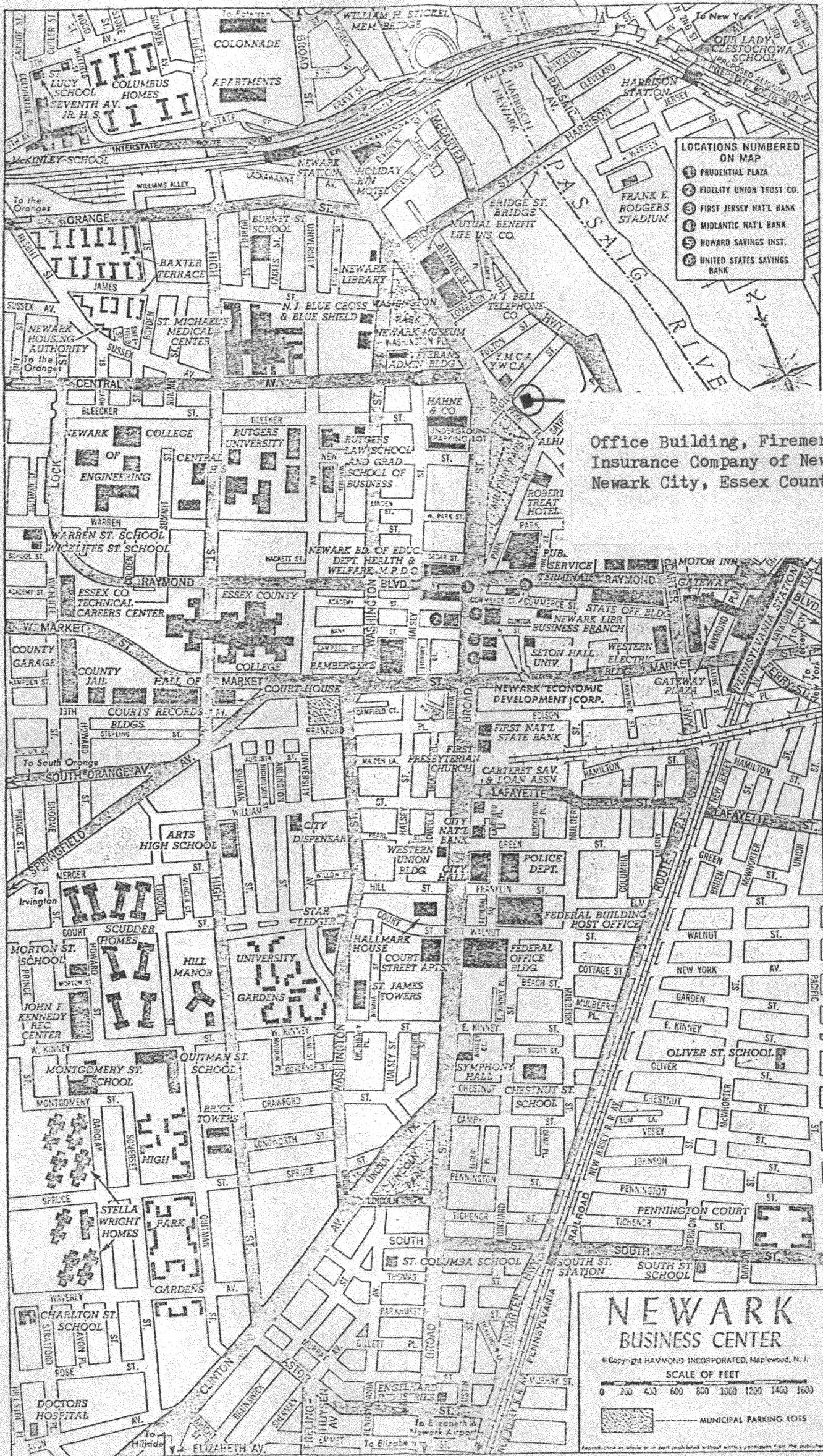
RECTOR

Firemen's Building

Home Office Building of
Firemen's Insurance Company of
Newark
Newark City, Essex County, NJ

REFERENCE:
SANBORN INSURANCE MAP
Volume 1, Plate 8
1930

SCALE
0 25 50



- LOCATIONS NUMBERED ON MAP**
- 1 PRUDENTIAL PLAZA
 - 2 FIDELITY UNION TRUST CO.
 - 3 FIRST JERSEY NAT'L BANK
 - 4 MIDLANTIC NAT'L BANK
 - 5 HOWARD SAVINGS INST.
 - 6 UNITED STATES SAVINGS BANK

Office Building, Firemen's Insurance Company of Newark, Newark City, Essex County, NJ

NEWARK BUSINESS CENTER

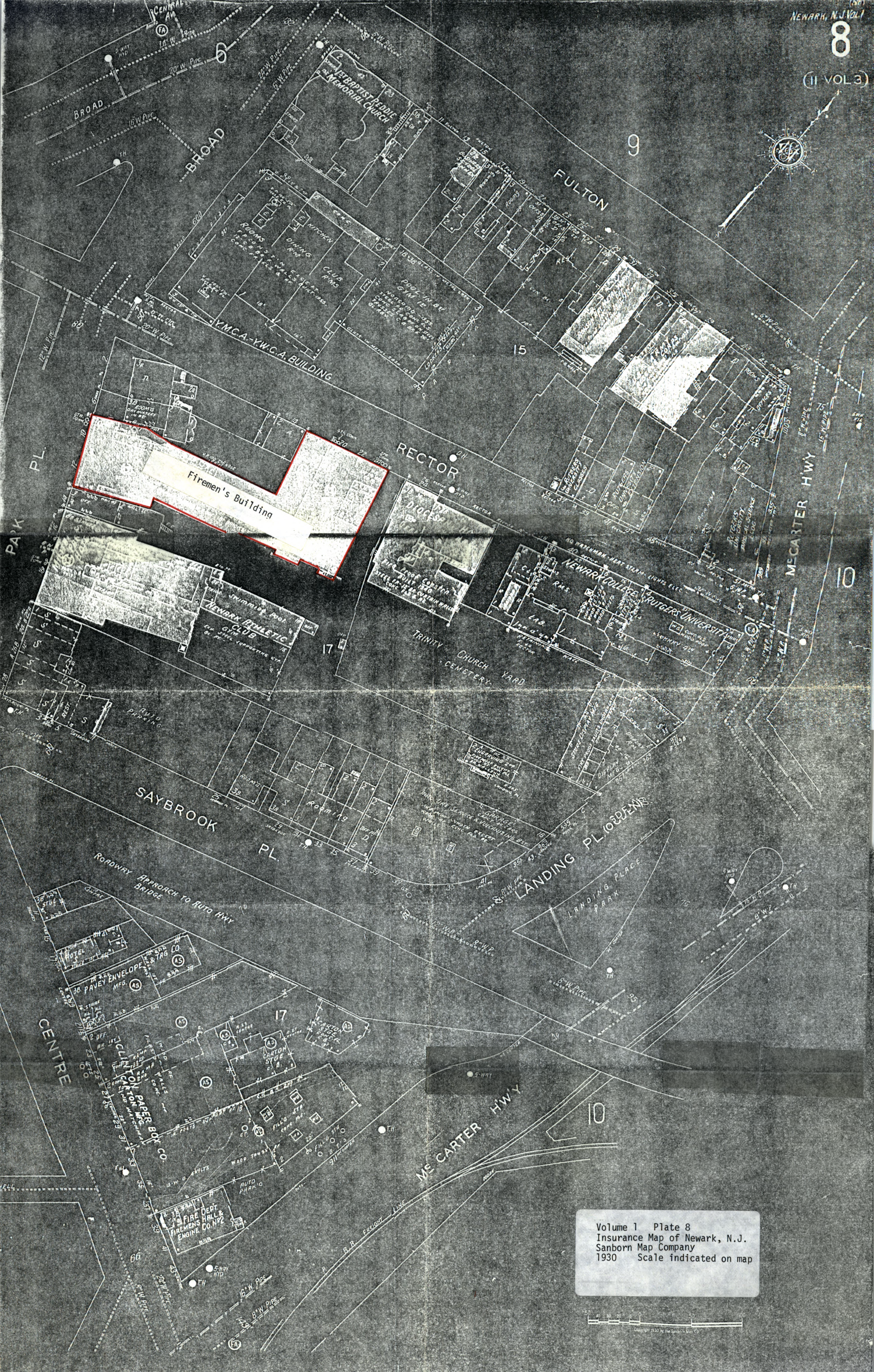
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SCALE OF FEET

0 200 400 600 800 1000 1200 1400 1600

MUNICIPAL PARKING LOTS

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Volume 1 Plate 8
Insurance Map of Newark, N.J.
Sanborn Map Company
1930 Scale indicated on map



Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ

Photo 1
View from Southwest



FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANY

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ

Photo 2
South Facade



Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ

Photo 3
View from Northwest



FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANY

Photo 4
South Facade
First and Second Floors

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Photo 5
First Floor
Banking Space

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Photo 6
Second Floor
President's Office

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Photo 7
Second Floor
President's Office
Photo from Newark Sunday Call
Dec. 1, 1935

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Photo 8
Second Floor
Board Room

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo 9
Second Floor
Board Room

Photo from Newark Sunday Call
Dec. 1, 1935



Photo 10
Typical Open Interior

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ



Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo 11

Typical Office Interior

Photo from Newark Sunday Call

Dec. 1, 1935



Photo 12
View from Southeast,
Across Military Park

Firemen's Building
Newark
Essex County
New Jersey

Photo by Jeffrey Abrams
Dec., 1981
Negative Filed with
The Aspen Group
56 Park Place
Newark, NJ